

CASE STUDY

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Transformation of Tribal area into production of Nutritious Millets in Koraput through Odisha Millet Mission: A Case Study Analysis

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ABSTRACT

India is traditionally an agrarian based economy. Odisha, a state of India, is now a point of discussion in the entire world for its famous Millets Mission. Initially, the Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) was launched by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment, Government of Odisha, in seven districts in 2016-17. Over the years, from 30 blocks, it has scaled up to 142 blocks in nineteen districts. Nearly 75,000 hectares are cultivated by 1.5 lakh farmers for producing millets. The mission helps to reduce critical challenges like malnutrition, shortage of food, food insecurity etc. and revitalise sustainable farming and consumption of millets from Tribal areas, which foster economic opportunities and social upliftment. The Government emphasises on the production of millets, and at the same time it integrates it into public nutrition schemes like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Public Distribution Systems (PDS), Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme and other welfare schemes. In Koraput Odisha Millet Mission has expanded with 12 blocks and 25000 farmers are engaged in the cultivation of 10,000 hectares of land under the guidance of District Collector. Now Koraput is a role model for sustainable development under Odisha Millets Mission. The mission has brought together multiple stakeholders like Farmer Producer Organisations, Self-Help Groups, Agricultural Technology Management Agency, etc.

The main **Objective** of the Case Study is to highlight the OMM in Koraput District. The study throws light on the basic integrated technologies like line Sowing, Line Transplantation, non-chemical crop management, etc. used in millet cultivation, which are helpful to make the environment clean and green. The social inclusion of men and women, protection of the environment, and focus on nutrition and productivity have created a field to achieve Sustainable Development Goals such as, SDG1-No Poverty, SDG 2- Zero Hunger, SDG 5- Gender Equality, SDG 8- Economic Growth, SDG9- Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure and many others.

The **Methodology** of the study is qualitative, and data is collected from secondary sources from the internet, journals, newspapers, etc.

This case study **concludes** that the great success of OMM is a live example of millet, enjoyed by all, which was traditionally treated as the 3rd choice food (after rice and wheat), now transformed into a nutritious food.

Keywords: Nutritious millet, Odisha Millet Mission, SDGs, Agriculture, Tribal development



1. INTRODUCTION

Millet, as part of traditional agricultural food systems, have been cultivated by several rural farmers. Millet crops are unique in that they grow easily in resource-constrained regions and rain-fed areas. Tribal areas are an ideal platform for producing millets with limited inputs and water. The Odisha Millet Mission in Koraput is closely associated with the farming of traditional food grains, which provides food security and employment to many households (Sahoo, 2021). But the cultivation of millet declined over several decades, and alternative crops occupied a higher place in farming, reducing millet-specific area. The Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) has taken different initiatives to highlight the crop (Chapke, et al., 2025). In today's era, millet is a healthy food for commercial sale rather than only household consumption. Earlier, the farmers of Koraput had a high preference for other crops and left finger millet for household use only. The production, procurement and marketing of millets were heavy challenges for traditional farmers (Sahoo and Samantaray, 2021). With the introduction of OMM in 2017 by the Government of Odisha, the ignored crop has got its identity in international basis. The main objective of this scheme is to increase production of millets along with their marketing and commercial consumption with the help of broader value-chain intervention. It also includes improvement in sowing seeds, processing, and marketing of output with developed agronomic practices which help to increase both household consumption and export (NCDS, 2022). Similarly, the Mission enhances Tribal farming in seven Blocks (Dasmantapur, Nandapur, Boipariguda, Kundra, Boriguma, Semiliguda and Lamtaput) of Koraput in the first phase. As a result, OMM incorporates climate resilience, gender equality, nutritious products and better livelihoods (WFP India & Odisha Millet Mission, 2022). According to the Mid-term Evaluation report of NCDS, 204 Gram Panchayats, 1,197 villages, and 19,007 farmers benefited from OMM by the end of Kharif 2019-20. In seven blocks, 7,318.91 hectares of fields are significantly cultivated in Koraput (NCDS, 2022). The economic and social condition of farmers and women has improved as a large number of women have participated extensively in cultivation, harvest and post-harvest activities of millet (Sahoo and Samantaray, 2021). The basic challenge of OMM was to generate economic returns without reducing the nutritional value of millet cultivation. The women have closely associated with farming, creating aware of the other local women to be engaged in livelihood practices and value-added functions (Rana and Sahoo, 2023). Their participation transforms community-level enterprises into commercial-level enterprises. OMM strengthens the cooperation and active

participation of women and provides better opportunities in the mission of the millet value chain (WFP India & OMM, 2022).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sahoo & Samantaray (2021) have studied the relevance of farming of millet in rain-fed communities. Diversified farming and adaptability to climate provide food security and livelihood. The authors have collected primary data from 150 millet cultivators and observed that millet plays a vital role in household consumption, as it provides economic potential. The authors have discussed on the constraints, such as procurement and marketing faced by rural farmers, which influenced the choice of crops. They evaluated that commercial indicators are not enough to measure the success of the millet mission, but other indicators like cultural practices, household consumption, stability of livelihood, and food security in tribal areas are very important.

The Naba Krushna Choudhury Centre of Development Studies (NCDS, 2022) Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) is an integrated intervention that represents a comprehensive approach to the development of millets. The programme has emphasised not only farm-level production but also processing, marketing, maintaining the value chain and consumption of millets. The NCDS helps in the assessment of district-level production and conducting baseline surveys. The basic roles of NCDS can be explained in the following manner (NCDS, 2022).

Role of NCDS in the Millet Mission

NCDS designed the mission of OMM in the early stage of development in 2017, which brought together both the Government of Odisha and Civil Society Organizations. It is known as *Shree Anna Abhiyan*. The Phase-I evaluation was done by NCDS researchers by considering the baseline 2016-17, and they evaluated the cultivation of millets, cultivated lands, number of farmers engaged, total productivity, engagement of women, livelihood and enhancement in socio-economic values. NCDS used Scientific Monitoring & Evaluation to assess the outcomes of programmes. As a result, this mission accelerated improvements in the performance of millet production, resilience of the environment, improvements in life and livelihood, and the development of tribal people in Koraput. The mid-term assessment conducted by NCDS offers substantial empirical evidence on the early spread of the Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) across Koraput district. During the Kharif season of 2019–20, OMM activities across the seven selected blocks extended to 204 Gram Panchayats and 1,197 villages and hamlets. The programme involved approximately 19,007 farmers,

with millet cultivation covering 7,318.91 hectares (NCDS, 2022). According to the report of Naba Krushna Choudhury Centre of Development Studies (NCDS, 2022), the OMM was launched in 2016-17 in Koraput, and the first-phase evaluation was conducted in 2017-18 to assess total yield, level of production, practices of agronomic techniques, nutrition, consumption and market accessibility. The programme was evaluated in seven (7) blocks with five hundred fifty-nine (559) households of millet cultivators and analysed the changes in production process, market participation, and involvement of women farmers (NCDS, 2022).

Tripathy et al. (2024) have focused on the assessment of the impact of the Odisha Millet Mission on tribal farmers living in Koraput, Odisha. They have used a purposive random sampling technique and collected data from one hundred twenty (120) respondents from four villages in Koraput. The basic objective was to assess the benefits gained by the mission and the successful implementation of the programme. The authors assessed the perceptions of farmers and beneficiaries based on different OMM practices, such as improved agronomic techniques, availability of quality seeds, food security, and increased consumption at both the household and commercial levels. The research concludes that OMM has played a vital role in enhancing employment and income among farmers in Koraput.

Saha et al. (2021) have emphasised the basic problems of the tribal population who lived in a highly vulnerable situation and faced malnutrition. There was environmental instability and exploitation of middlemen, which created risks for tribal farmers. The initiatives taken by OMM have helped the farmers, and they prefer millets to sell in mandis at the right price. There is collaboration between mandis and Large Area Multi-Purpose Societies (LAMPS), Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC), Odisha State Agricultural Marketing Board, etc. The farmers get a mandi card which consists of their land holdings and the regulation of purchased quantity. As a result, the middlemen cannot exploit them. Another common problem of malnutrition in tribal people is curbed with the production and local consumption of millets.

Sahoo et al. (2024) have studied the impact of OMM on tribal lives and their livelihood in Koraput. Their study states that millet is a nutritious product that is consumed by both human beings and animals. Millet can be grown in low-water, environmentally varied, hilly areas with less moisture. The pro-environmental crop is getting popular due to OMM. The mission boosts cultivation through modern techniques, procurement, consumption and value addition. The study also states that OMM helps in creating employment and providing livelihood for

tribal farmers in Koraput. The study suggests that, for a better standard of living, further initiatives like creating awareness among tribal farmers must be taken by the government. It will provide more opportunities to them.

Rana and Sahoo (2023) have discussed the increasing participation of women farmers in millet farming in Koraput. Women play a multifaceted role in livelihood and household activities. The authors have collected data from three hundred (300) farmers engaged in farming and post-harvesting of millet. The authors have analysed that there is the demonstrative effect of women, and a large number of women are involved in diversified activities of cultivation of millet, its supply, marketing and consumption aspects. Rana and Sahoo have concluded that OMM strengthens the power of women and enhances their socio-economic status. Similarly, Chapke et al. (2025) focused on millet cultivation and its cultural significance in Koraput. This study also highlights the efforts of women farmers during the harvest and post-harvest period. The women farmers are more responsive and adaptive to accessible technologies.

Patnaik et al. (2024) have studied farmers who benefited from OMM in Koraput and farmers who do not belong to Koraput. OMM acts as an intervention by creating awareness among farmers about millet production through modern technology, adopting new cultivation strategies, selling quality products at reasonable prices through mandis, enabling easy and quick earnings, and engaging in social activities to create a broad publicity channel for millets. Similarly, by implementing a comprehensive value-chain approach, OMM integrates the production of millet, distribution and consumption. At the same time, it creates gender equity and maintains practices of climate resilience (WFP India & Odisha Millet Mission, 2022).

The United Nations in India has also emphasised that the Mission seeks to strengthen the livelihoods and food security of small-scale farmers, while simultaneously expanding millet consumption through institutional procurement and nutrition-focused interventions (United Nations in India, 2022). Consequently, OMM represents a transition beyond a purely production-centred model towards the creation of a broader and more integrated millet ecosystem.

3. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Main objective of this paper, while discussing the case, is to examine the implementation and evolution of the Odisha Millets Mission (OMM) in Koraput district, with particular emphasis on the production and expansion of millets and participation of farmers, especially women. The other main objective is to focus on challenges faced by OMM in Koraput and assess socio-economic

development of tribal-rural people with the sustainability of millet-based agriculture.

The case study approach follows a qualitative methodology to explore the Odisha Millet Mission in Koraput. Data are collected from secondary sources, including academic research, government publications, and NCDS reports.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Cultural resources as foundations of digital agribusiness narratives

According to the NCDS report, OMM has expanded in Koraput in its initial implementation stage. Initially, OMM has covered seven blocks, two hundred four Gram Panchayat and one thousand one hundred ninety-seven villages by the Kharif season (2019-20). Millet cultivation has covered approximately 7,318.91 hectares of land by nineteen thousand seven farmers.

Over this period, the programme had reached a cumulative total of 19,007 farmers (NCDS, 2022). The following table explains both indicators and the status of Kharif 2019-20

Indicator	Status by Kharif 2019–20
Blocks covered	7
Gram Panchayats	204
Villages/Hamlets	1,197
Farmers covered	19,007
Area under millet cultivation (ha)	7,318.91

Source: NCDS (2022), based on OMM monitoring records.

It is found that beyond the limited pilot programme, OMM has progressed successfully in Koraput and engaged a large number of farmers by providing their livelihood.

Similarly, the expansion can also be understood by the following table, which exhibits crop seasons, farmers and cultivated areas by farmers.

Crop season	Farmers covered	Area (ha)
Kharif 2017–18	2,662	1,134.45
Rabi 2017–18	111	61.40
Kharif 2018–19	6,542	2,348.74
Rabi 2018–19	145	50.80
Kharif 2019–20	9,547	3,723.52
Cumulative total	19,007	7,318.91

Source: NCDS, 2022.

The findings indicate that the majority of the programme's expansion took place during the Kharif seasons. This pattern can be attributed to Koraput's substantial reliance on agriculture dependent on monsoon

rainfall. The consistent growth in farmer participation across successive Kharif seasons further suggests that the geographical coverage and institutional reach of the Odisha Millets Mission (OMM) were gradually expanding (NCDS, 2022).

4.2 Shree Anna Abhiyan

"Shree Anna Abhiyan" is the local name for OMM in Koraput, which transformed the district into a centre of indigenous millet farming and increased the income of nearly thirty thousand local tribal farmers. The following picture is collected in this purpose which states the role of millets in the upliftment of tribal farmers.

4.3 Koraput's Success Story under Odisha Millets Mission

Nowadays, Koraput is very famous not only for sustainable production of ragi but also for rural infrastructural development. "*Mandia*" (or, millet), the finger millet, is heavily produced in hilly areas in Southern Odisha where rainfall is low. "*Mandies*", the millet procurement centres have been set up by the district administration across blocks like Kundra, Nandapur, etc., for fair pricing. Women empowerment is another achievement of Koraput as they have participated in controlling local processing units and preservation of seeds. Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) take initiative in food safety and security, supply chain management, and value-added services at the grassroots level. Ragi is a very nutritious crop, and OMM has emphasised reducing malnutrition by preserving nutrition very successfully in each phase of production, distribution and consumption (<https://milletsodisha.com/>).

4.4 Transformation of Tribal areas into Socio-Economic Development of farmers

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment in Odisha has promoted cultivation of millets through the Odisha Millet Mission in 2017 in Koraput with a vision to enhance the socio-economic condition of Tribal people by providing them both employment and nutritious life. The district of Koraput was very well known for resource constraints and lack of livelihood facilities. The crucial steps taken by the government to promote cultivation of millet have provided tremendous opportunities to the people of the tribal area. As the life of Ragi grows, the lives of farmers are being uplifted. Patnaik et al. studied the positive impact on the well-being of tribal communities and their socio-economic progress in 2020-21 and did interviews with villagers. They identified that the mission has helped them to enhance their knowledge in production

by adopting advanced technologies and increase their standard of living by increasing annual income. Without any gender discrimination, both males and females are engaged in farming of millet, its supply, and maintenance of the value chain, consumption and commercialisation. The socio-economic conditions of Tribal farmers have positively improved (Patnaik et al., 2024).

Under the guidance of IAS Keerthi Vasan, the District Collector, OMM has expanded in twelve blocks along with ten thousand hectares of cultivation with twenty-five thousand farmers, which has become a role model of sustainable development and inclusive farming in Koraput. The programme was started with seven blocks; now it provides collaborative implementation of modern farming approaches, such as the System of Ragi Intensification (SRI), System of Finger Millet Intensification (SFMI), etc., which reduces the use of inputs, enhances the productivity of millets, promotes the transplantation of young seeds and improves the resilience of crops <https://www.mssrf.org/stories-of-change/somarai-hantal>. The following picture depicts the success of Somarai Hantal, who has received the award of “Best SMI Farmer” on 10th November, 2025, at *Mandia Divas* (or, Millet day).

SMI is known as the System of Finger Millet Intensification or the System of Ragi Intensification approach to farming. The award winner has stated that by using such modern approaches, her yield has increased at an increasing rate. After receiving the award from the District Administration, Somarai has become an inspiration for many women not only in Goloriguda but also for all Tribal communities and Rural Farmers. <https://www.mssrf.org/stories-of-change/somarai-hantal>. By empowering Tribal Communities, OMM has connected farmers with institutional buyers by providing fair prices

for millet. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme has been introduced, and value-added enterprises like Millet Shakti Cafes and outlets have been established in Koraput to make urban areas aware of millets and create more livelihood opportunities. The recent Koraput evidence particularly highlights the need to combine indigenous knowledge with ergonomic and gender-sensitive technological interventions (Chapke et al., 2025).

4.5 OMM: A Path Forward to Fulfilling SDGs

The Odisha Millet Mission (OMM), introduced by the Government of Odisha during 2017–18, represents an integrated policy intervention aimed at strengthening the millet sector across the stages of production, processing, marketing and consumption. Rather than treating millet cultivation solely as an agricultural activity, the mission connects it with nutrition, livelihood improvement, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. The success of OMM can also be evaluated in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by using a qualitative mapping approach based on the Food and Agriculture Organization’s Climate-Smart Agriculture framework. According to Bhattar and Laha (2026)

OMM has transformed hilly and dry areas with a lack of rain and low-fertility lands into a big commercial area of production of a nutritious product, Millet. The small farmers, tribal women and other rural people are engaged in farming millet locally and transporting it globally. OMM as an intervention contributes to achieving SDG goals. By cultivating millet in Koraput it employs tribal farmers. As a result, there is improvement in livelihood and reduction of poverty and fulfilment of the goal of SDG1. Similarly, Koraput is now very famous for producing and providing a very nutritious product, Millet. It is helpful



Figure 1. Millet crop cultivator being rewarded at a state level function

Source: <https://www.mssrf.org/stories-of-change/somarai-hantal>

to reduce malnutrition-related problems and preserve food properly, and fulfil the goal of SDG2. The goal of SDG 5 is achieved by OMM as it creates employment opportunities for both males and females without doing any discrimination. It maintains the principle of social inclusion. Similarly, economic development is the 8th goal of SDG, which is achieved by OMM by enhancing both life and livelihoods of tribal people. The climate resilience and environmental security goal is fulfilled by OMM (SDG13) (Bhatter & Laha, 2026)

I. Basic Challenges Faced By OMM

OMM has faced some basic challenges related to inadequate infrastructural development and lack of accessibility of quality seeds. Another issue is small and fragmented landholdings, low fertility of land and low productivity. OMM also faced high cost of production at its initial phase due to a lack of awareness and proper training in mechanical cultivation. The tribal farmers have faced difficulties due to exploitation of intermediaries regarding procurement, marketing and selling of millet. Again, lack of value addition facilities and inadequate processing facilities decline production (Nayak & Das, 2022; Tripathy et al., 2024; ICRISAT, 2021; Sahoo & Samantaray, 2021).

II. Strategies to Curb the Challenges

“Farm-to-Farm” strategy that strengthens the value chain from millet production to procurement can easily address the basic challenges. Timely provision of better-quality seeds by OMM has brought high-quality millet

that is full of nutrition. It helps to provide employment, reduce poverty, maintain the principle of inclusion and ensure environmental safety. By creating awareness among young farmers and taking help from traditional farmers, the mission has improved production and maintained food safety. The Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) take care of entire village-level processing and value addition. The procurement centres are decentralised, and prompt payment is given to farmers on their sales. It helps to make the millet-based product process systematic to maintain its nutrition and engage more and more women employed in millet farming enterprises. As a result, the socio-economic status of tribal people has gradually enhanced. (NITI Aayog, 2023; World Food Programme India & Odisha Millet Mission, 2022; ICRISAT, 2021; Government of India, 2026, <https://www.soundnlight.in/koraputs-success-story-under-odisha-millet-mission-2/>)

III. Future Scope and Applications

The future perspective and application of OMM is very broad and it is not restricted within the district, Koraput, but is spreading increasingly. The millet is used by local people as a source of food and fodder and for commercial uses. The “Shaktimayee Ward Mission Shakti Mahasangh”, “Subhadra Shakti Bazaars”, and “Women-Led Farmer Producer Organisations” are providing marketing platforms for tribal women farmers. At the same time millet has created its own place in foreign markets. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has facilitated Dubai



Figure 2. Prime Minister of India flagging off the first commercial millet consignment.

Source: Times of India- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/odishas-first-millet-consignment-reaches-abroad/articleshow/97402045.cms>

Consignment for millet. The different products made from millet are appreciated in overseas (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/odishas-first-millet-consignment-reaches-abroad/articleshow/97402045.cms>)

The above picture is the first commercial millet consignment that has reached the international market by Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) run by women. By exporting millets and millet-related products like ragi chips. Snacks, flour, instant mixes etc., add value to millet and increase the income of tribal farmers. As a result, their standard of living will be increased, and they will maintain socio-economic security. They are self-dependent and use their community-based processing units for millet procurement (ICRISAT, 2021; NITI Aayog, 2023).

The OMM provides a large number of employment opportunities with the development of entrepreneurial skills and techniques. It preserves the environment and culture and enhances nutrition. It creates market expansion and women's empowerment. The significant and future scope of OMM is broader, as it includes strengthening vulnerable households, small and marginal farmers, serving children and supporting the production of a diversified diet. OMM acts as an intervention by creating institutional consumption and creating demand in the world market (United Nations in India, 2022; World Food Programme India & Odisha Millet Mission, 2022). OMM contributes to strengthening climate resilience by practising conservation of soil, soil moisture, soil management, crop diversification and proper use of natural resources and by producing millets to provide livelihoods for tribal farmers. Day by day, it expands and develops with the help of digital marketing. OMM enhances its scope by utilising online platforms for promotion, selling, and consumption of millet-based foods (ICRISAT, 2021; NITI Aayog, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment of the Government of Odisha initiated the Odisha Millets Mission (OMM) in 2016-17. Its main objective was to cultivate millets in tribal, rain-fed regions of Koraput District. The programme was implemented in areas that were affected by unemployment, drought, malnutrition, food insecurity, ecological instability and limited livelihoods. Primarily, it was implemented in thirty blocks across seven districts, but gradually it has expanded to one hundred forty-two blocks across nineteen districts. Historically, millet was known as the diet of poor people and its position came after rice and wheat. People were not aware of the nutritional value of the food. But now as a nutritious food, millet is very popular not only in

Koraput, Odisha, but it is also exported to different states of India and also in overseas. By promoting millets as both a nutritious food and a viable agricultural commodity, the mission seeks to strengthen the resilience and economic well-being of vulnerable farming communities. Millets are included in welfare programmes in the Mid-Day Meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Services. OMM creates a platform for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of zero hunger and no poverty, reduction of malnutrition, provision of employment, women empowerment, socio and economic development. OMM also supports sustainable rural development and climate resilience.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of use of secondary resources in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors referred and used materials relating to OMM. But the authors independently developed the conceptual framework and scholarly arguments and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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